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Letter dated 10 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information on the work of the "White Helmets" in Syria (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 31, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) P. **Iliichev**
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 10 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF EXTREMISM, CAMBRIDGE

"Syria – Six Years On: From Destruction to Reconstruction.

THE WHITE HELMETS: FACT OR FICTION – INTERVENTION BY VANESSA BEELEY 5/4/2017

SLIDE ONE INFOGRAPH

My name is Vanessa Beeley. I am an independent investigative journalist, writer and photographer based in France. I contribute regularly to various independent media sites such as 21st Century Wire, the Ron Paul Institute, Global research, Mint Press. In 2016 I spent a total of three months in Syria, including Aleppo in August and then in December following in the tracks of the SAA as they liberated East Aleppo from the Nusra Front led armed militant and extremist occupation.

For the last two years I have been conducting an ongoing investigation into the White Helmets, the much promoted, so called, Syrian humanitarian NGO that has recently achieved Hollywood fame through the Oscar, awarded to the Netflix documentary, showcasing White Helmet exploits in Syria. This investigation culminated in my going to Syria to expand my enquiries and research on the ground inside Syria.

Who are the White Helmets according to the White Helmets, created in 2013 [1]

1: *"Syrian impartial humanitarian NGO, with no official affiliation to any political or military actor and a commitment to render services to any in need regardless of sect or political affiliation"*

2: Motto is "To save one life is to save all humanity" so non-sectarian and operating without bias

3: They are unarmed

4: They have saved 82,000 lives since they began working in Syria from end of 2013/early 2014

5: They are Syrian and the impression is given that the White Helmets are the primary USAR organisation operating inside Syria

My in-depth investigation into the legitimacy of these claims have raised some very disturbing anomalies, that have never been identified or raised by the mainstream media in the UK, EU or US, with some very minor exceptions. Why not? I will now run through my findings but I must emphasize that I am far from being alone in raising the following concerns, many of my colleagues in independent media and NGOs fostering peaceful resolution to the Syrian conflict have conducted their own analysis and drawn very similar conclusions:

1: The White Helmets receive funding from UK Foreign Office, curiously through the Conflict, Stability and Security fund for NON-HUMANITARIAN AID [2]

"the total value of funds committed between June 2013 and the end of the current financial year (31 March 2016) is £19.7m" in a statement made by the Foreign & Commonwealth office [3]

At the end of September 2016 Boris Johnson pledged a further £ 32m.

The US has funded the WH a disclosed $ 23 m via their USAID/Chemonics networks this was admitted by Mark Toner of the US State Dept. [4]

A look at various other EU government websites, reveal that:

Holland ($ 4.5m), Germany ($ 7.87m) Japan (undisclosed sum from the Intl Cooperation Agency), Denmark (undisclosed sum). The White Helmets also receive equipment and supplies from various EU member states.

This funding is concealed behind the generic heading of "Emergency Health and Relief Support to the Population Affected by the Crisis in Syria", through the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO), formerly known as the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office. [5]

More recently Qatar has also confirmed funding of the White Helmets. Qatar is known to be funding many of the extremist factions operating inside Syria.

All governments funding the White Helmets have publicly declared an interest in removing President Assad and effecting "regime change" in Syria and must surely compromise their proclaimed neutrality.

2: The White Helmets were established in **Turkey**, *not* in Syria. They are largely trained in Turkey and Jordan, not inside Syria. They were established in March 2013 by a British ex-military officer, James Le Mesurier with $ 300k seed funding from Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. [6]

3: The White Helmets are embedded exclusively in areas of Syria occupied by listed terrorist organisations including Nusra Front and ISIS, along with various associated 'moderate rebels' such as Ahrar al Sham and Nour Al Din Zinki. All these groups & sub-groups are responsible for carrying out ethnic cleansing pogroms and documented atrocities against the Syrian people. Nour Al Din Zinki videoed themselves beheading 12 year-old Palestinian child, Abdullah Issa in July 2016. Like the White Helmets, the majority of these armed groups receive funding, training, equipment and support from the United States and its Coalition partners, particularly the Gulf states. A fact that is extensively documented. [7]

4: During the situation in Madaya, Syria in January 2016, the White Helmets in Idlib were photographed attending demonstrations & carrying banners that were calling for the "burning and destruction" of the towns of Kafarya and Foua. These are two Idlib villages under full siege by Ahrar Al Sham & Nusra Front (Al Qaeda in Syria) since March 2015, partial siege since 2012. The siege ensures the starvation of villagers and daily shelling and sniping by Ahrar Al Sham and Nusra Front has killed over 1750 civilians during this time.

SLIDE TWO: KAFARYA AND FOUA

5: There is video and photographic evidence available that clearly shows the White Helmets participating in Nusra Front operations in the areas occupied or taken over by this organisation. There is one particularly damning video taken during the Nusra Front violent and brutal attack on Idlib City in March 2015. In this video White Helmet operatives are seen clearly beating a Syrian civilian prisoner of Nusra Front

and circling the prisoner, mingling with heavily armed and hostile Nusra Front militia. [8]

6: May 5th 2015 the White Helmets were filmed "clearing up" after a Nusra Front execution of a civilian prisoner in Northern Aleppo. Although the official statement from the White Helmets claims they arrived after the execution, the speed with which they appear (in video) immediately after the prisoner has been shot in the head, demonstrates clearly that they were on the scene and did nothing to prevent it. [9]

SLIDE THREE EXECUTION

7: Various other White Helmet operatives have posted videos of the torture and execution of Syrian Arab Army prisoners or to their social media pages with celebratory comments. One such operative, **Muawiya Hassan Agha**, is alleged to have been "sacked" from the White Helmets, for his participation in one such execution of 2 SAA prisoners of war in Khan Touman, S Aleppo May 2016, a clear violation of all ethics surrounding an "impartial" NGO. However, despite various demands, an official statement has never been issued by the White Helmets. Neither have they publicly condemned the torture and execution of prisoners of war, an act that contravenes the Geneva Convention. Within 3 weeks of his alleged sacking, Agha appeared in White Helmet photographs as one of their photographers. [10]

8: The leader of the White Helmets, Raed Saleh, was deported from Dulles Airport in the US, April 2016. No real explanation was ever given for this decision. Mark Toner of the US State Department fielded questions from media but did (i) Admit to funding the group with $ 23m and (ii) suggest that Raed Saleh might have "extremist connections". Raed Saleh has recently been allowed back into the US in September 2016 and spoke at the UN New York with the Dutch Mission, he was involved in the closed sessions with Syrian activists and then secretary of State, John Kerry, published by the NYT. [11]

8a: While on the subject of Raed Saleh, who is the leader and global representative of the White Helmets, he is a close colleague of another White Helmet leader in Khan Sheikhoun, Idlib, Mustafa Al Haj Yussef. Yussef has been with the WH since 2013 and is photographed in Idlib with Raed Saleh. Yussef's social media accounts reveal the following: [12]

SLIDE FOUR RAED SALEH & YUSSEF

- He has called for the unity of extremist factions such as Nusra Front and Ahrar al Sham
- He has clearly professed allegiance and support for Ahrar Al Sham, responsible for the massacres in the Alawite village of Al Zaraa May 2016
- He publicly calls for the shelling of civilians in Damascus during the 2014 elections.
- He advocates the extreme of executing civilians during Ramadan if they fail to fast
- He endorses the looting of SAA houses after their capture or execution which he also publicly calls for.

If the head of the Red Cross were committing such ethical breaches, we would surely be calling for a full investigation.

SLIDE FIVE REAL SYRIA CIVIL DEFENCE

9: The White Helmets are also referred to as the 'Syria Civil Defence.' However, there is an existing Syria Civil Defence. **The REAL Syria Civil Defence was established in Syria in 1953**. I met with crews in Aleppo, Lattakia, Tartous and Damascus during my four weeks in Syria. The REAL Syria Civil Defence were founder members of the ICDO [International Civil Defence Organisation] which is affiliated with the UN, WHO, OCHA, Red Cross, Red Crescent. The REAL Syria Civil Defence are still paying annual subscriptions to the ICDO of 20,000 Swiss Francs $ 20k. The REAL Syria Civil Defence operated in both government and armed militia held areas up to 2016 when it was decided they should only work in the Syrian government held areas for their own protection as the armed groups had been deliberately targeting their crew members when on a rescue mission in occupied areas. However, it must be noted that the REAL Syria Civil defence working in Syrian government held areas, actually service 80% of the Syrian population inside Syria, including the over 6m IDPs who have also fled to the government held towns and cities. [13]

SLIDE SIX MAP

The Real Syria Civil Defence are recruited and trained inside Syria & have been in existence for 60 years.

When the White Helmets were making a concerted bid to win the Nobel Peace Prize last year, supported almost universally by mainstream media in the UK, the internet link to the RSCD at the ICDO was mysteriously re-routed to the White Helmets. I called the ICDO and spoke with their representative who assured me that it was an admin mistake, during our conversation the following statements were made by this representative, there is a full audio recording of this conversation available. [14]

1: The White Helmets are not recognised by the ICDO & are not members of the ICDO

2: The White Helmets are not even "concretely" a civil defence organisation

3: The White Helmets is the "wrong" civil defence

4: The only civil defence recognised by the ICDO and the UN is the "official" Syria Civil Defence

Western public perception has been deceived into believing the White Helmets are the only Syria Civil Defence, thus "disappearing" over 4000 REAL Syria Civil defence workers.

10: August 2016 interviews with the REAL Syria Civil Defence, I was informed that the Nusra Front and associated 'moderate rebels' who invaded areas such as East Aleppo, Raqqa, Deir Ezzor, Idlib, massacred crew members of the REAL Syria Civil Defence and stole the majority of their equipment in those areas, including fire engines and ambulances. Many of these armed groups then became White Helmet operatives. Testimony from the REAL Syria Civil Defence suggested that the White Helmets are acting as support for Nusra Front, ISIS and other heavily armed militia described as "moderate rebels". [15]

Aleppo August 2016, I conducted a short video interview with Dr Bassem Hayak of the Aleppo Medical Association, based in West Aleppo. Hayak told me that his family, trapped in East Aleppo had never seen the White Helmets and Hayak said even the UN agencies still operating in East Aleppo such as the SARC had not encountered the WH.

This testimony was further confirmed by the civilian statements I gathered while in East Aleppo during liberation, visiting each district as it was retaken by the SAA.

All civilians I spoke to, perhaps over 50 from all districts, were confused when I asked them if they knew the White Helmets. When I asked if they knew of a civil defence, their immediate response was "yes, yes Nusra Front civil defence". All these unedited interviews are available on my YouTube channel and in my reports. I was told that the White Helmets did not help civilians, they were a support group for Nusra Front, Ahrar Al Sham, Nour al Din Zinki etc. Some told me they were thieves, that they would steal from the victims bodies. One man told Lizzie Phelan of RT that they killed his baby girl by injecting air into her veins. I was told no medical treatment was available for civilians during the five year long occupation. [16]

Pierre Le Corf, a young Frenchman working as an independent humanitarian volunteer in Aleppo, filmed the main White Helmet centre in East Aleppo after the WH had left in the buses that evacuated the armed groups including Nusra Front. His film shows us that the White Helmet centre, the main one in East Aleppo, was integrated into the Nusra Front compound [Al Qaeda in Syria] and that this White Helmet centre was adorned with a variety of graffitti and flags affirming the White Helmet affiliation to the various terrorist groups. He also found documents proving that the White Helmets were working directly for Nusra Front and the various other extremist groups. [17]

The video is also available on my YouTube channel.

SLIDE SEVEN SWEDHR

11: On multiple occasions, the White Helmets have been exposed staging rescue scenes for both photo and video, recycling images of children and incidents from the conflict in Syria, to support their narrative, editing video which misrepresents the scene in question, using images from a previous incident or even fake images altogether. There are many documented instances of this but perhaps the most recent and the most disturbing is the investigation by SWEDHR who analysed the WH report on the alleged Sarmin chlorine gas attacks in March 2015. The WH video was presented at the UN in another closed door session instigated by then US Ambassador, Samantha Power, and "reduced the UN officials to tears".

The video depicts three naked, lifeless children being treated for the alleged chlorine gas inhalation. The youngest child has a hypodermic syringe inserted into his chest and moved around erratically before being withdrawn.

The SWEDHR examined the video from a professional medical & ethical perspective and came to the following shocking conclusions:

- *"After examination of the video material, I found that the measures inflicted upon those children, some of them lifeless, are bizarre, non-medical, non-lifesaving, and even counterproductive in terms of life-saving purposes of children" Dr Leif Elinder*
- *Intracutaneous injection with adrenalin procedure…is not correctly performed and would have resulted in the death of the child, if not already dead*
- *In studying the film closely SWEDHR concluded that the liquid level in the syringe does not change, therefore the child is being stabbed with the syringe needle for no reason*
- ***"I think that even from the very brief video, we can see that this child has a reduced level of consciousness: he does not vocalize, does not open his eyes,***

and his only movements are to turn his head to one side and to open his mouth before he stops breathing altogether. This looks like respiratory depression, rather than injury to the lungs; he appears to be too sleepy to breathe. I think the most likely diagnosis is a drug overdose causing reduced level of consciousness and respiratory depression. Opiates are the most likely class of drug to cause this. Chlorine causes acute inhalation injury, but does not (in any of the sources I have read) cause reduced level of consciousness: the victim struggles to breathe until the end."

The implications of this conclusion by a recognised organisation of medical experts are horrifying. Did the White Helmets use already dead children as propaganda props? Why has this investigation not been aired by any one of the mainstream media? [18] [18a]

SLIDE EIGHT BODIES

12: The White Helmets have been filmed describing Syrian Arab Army bodies as "trash" and one particular video shows them standing on top of a pile of SAA soldier's bodies, whose boots have been removed or stolen. The White Helmets talk about the bodies in pejorative terms and they flick a victory V sign as the truck drives off.

Remembering, of course, their claims of neutrality.

SLIDE NINE ARMED WH

13: There are multiple images documented and archived that reveal the White Helmet operatives carrying arms or posing with arms alongside the various armed militia including Nusra Front. There is also further footage from Idlib, March 2015, showing White Helmet operatives celebrating alongside Nusra Front militia after the massacre of Syrian Arab Army forces and Syrian civilians during this attack. [19]

14: Adulatory publicity about the White Helmets is the result of a multimillion dollar sustained commercial marketing and social media promotional campaign via a network that is funded by George Soros and various US, UK and Middle Eastern enterprises. The PR network is as follows: Avaaz – Purpose – Syria Campaign – White Helmets and is detailed by Cory Morningstar and Rick Sterling in their respective articles. [20]

15: Analysts have observed, the White Helmets achieve on average 4 or 5 videos per day, depicting their heroic rescue efforts. The REAL Syria Civil Defence have evaluated these videos and cast doubt as to the White Helmets being true first responders or USAR (Urban Search and Rescue) experts. They pinpointed various anomalies (i) the equipment used is too heavyweight for the delicate operation of finding bodies beneath collapsed buildings (ii) the treatment of injured bodies is dangerous, they are flung onto stretchers with no back support or neck brace, for example. Many of the paramedic procedures shown on film are also deemed questionable. The White Helmets rarely travel without a sizeable camera team or crew of mobile phone cameramen. The REAL Syria Civil Defence do not, they are too busy to consider PR.

The White Helmets claim to have saved over 82,000 lives, however there is no documentation of these lives, no names, no records. With all the logistical and financial support being received by this group, is it too much to ask?

SLIDE TEN SUMMARY

In summary, this evidence points to the White Helmets being a US, UK, EU creation established in 2013, and not an independent NGO. It is a multi-million dollar US UK Coalition funded organisation. It is funded by governments involved & invested in the Syrian conflict. No one can rightly call this a grass-roots Syrian organisation.

There is an existing Syria Civil Defence that is being ignored by western media. Running parallel there is a vast fund raising network constructed to collect money which is funnelled into the White Helmets designed to replace the authentic Syria Civil Defence in the minds of the western public. The REAL Syria Civil Defence is crippled by US and EU sanctions, the White Helmets have never been affected by these sanctions, their supply chain via Turkey is unbroken.

Conservative estimates put White Helmets funding at over $150 million thus far, which is far more than any real NGO would ever require in a decade, much less 3 years. Tax payers in funding countries have a right to know precisely what and who their money is funding.

The evidence demonstrates that the White Helmets are sectarian not impartial. They are in many instances, armed not unarmed. The promotional material produced for the White Helmets such as the recent Netflix documentary film, is often produced outside of Syria, usually in Turkey, and with any field footage supplied by the White Helmets. Who has verified the authenticity of this footage, or photographs?

The White Helmets are feeding images of "humanitarian disaster" and "war crimes" to the very same western nations who are funding them, and to politicians and media outlets who are using these visual narratives, with the explicit purpose of lobbying for a US, UK Foreign Office proposed, "Safe Zone" or "No Fly Zone" in Syria. Recent history teaches us, this No Fly Zone policy carries with it the threat of reducing Syria to a Libya-style "failed state."

Effectively, this alleged, impartial, neutral, apolitical, organisation actively campaigns for an escalation of war in Syria. This alone, should disqualify the White Helmets as a humanitarian organisation.

One of the funders of the Netflix Documentary withdrew considerable funding from the project in October 2016. The Threshold Foundation published a statement giving reasons for the withdrawal: [21]

"We have since learned that the subject of the film (the White Helmets organization) and others involved in this film are advocating for strategies that could entail international military force and escalated violence."

Many of the White Helmet 'campaigns' have since been discredited as "war fiction", and yet they are being used by the UK US Coalition as justification for continuing and increased economic and diplomatic sanctions, sanctions which are a collective punishment on the Syrian people, while the US coalition persists with equipping and arming the various militia on the ground in Syria, including Nusra Front (al Qaeda in Syria).

This only serves to ensure even more suffering and bloodshed inside Syria and delays the possibility of any real, peaceful resolution. It is incumbent upon us to ensure a full enquiry into the White Helmets as a part of the ongoing peace process.

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